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TAGS: [NATO](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: FRANCE CAUTIOUSLY SUPPORTIVE OF EXPANDING ON ISAF
COUNTER-NARCOTICS AUTHORITIES

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Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Kathleen Allegrone for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

(C) Post has raised with GOF officials several times the expansion of the ISAF mission to include counter-narcotics efforts, most recently in the September 5-6 visit of U.S. Ambassador to NATO Kurt Volker and the September 12 visit of Undersecretary of Defense for Police Eric Edelman. Francois Richier, Strategic Affairs Advisor to President Sarkozy and Michel Miraillet, Director of Strategic Affairs at the MOD provided the following responses (see reftel):

-- Richier informed us that the GOF is reviewing what NATO can do to assist counter-narcotic efforts, noting that the Afghans (and therefore the French as well) do not support large-scale eradication. Amb. Volker responded that NATO could assist in targeting drug labs, transport networks and the high-end traffickers, which financially support the Taliban through profits from the drug trade. The Afghan government cannot combat these networks on its own. Richier agreed, but noted GOF concerns that ISAF involvement in counter-narcotics could lead to increased civilian casualties, an already sensitive subject.

-- Miraillet also observed that the French experts are looking at the legal issues raised with the prospect of having military forces fighting civilians (even if those civilians are armed drug traffickers). Richier and Miraillet both said that it would be important for any counter-narcotic operations to be a mix of ISAF and Afghan security forces, so the effort has an Afghan face. Amb. Volker agreed that we want Afghan participation, but stressed that they do not yet have the capacity to take on these tasks by themselves.

-- To USDP Edelman, Richier noted that they were not likely to make any political decisions on changing the NATO mission prior to the September 22 vote in Parliament to approve the recent French deployments to Afghanistan.

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